TARGETING ACADEMIC VOCABUALRY: A HANDBOOK

FOR TEACHERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

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Abstract

Academic vocabulary plays an important role in English Language Learners' (ELLs) reading and writing comprehension. Acquiring academic vocabulary is considered a complex cognitive activity for ELLs because they need to learn a new language and at the same time learn academic content vocabulary to fulfill the school expectations. When considering these language learning challenges, studies on this topic advocate for the use of academic vocabulary strategies as a method to target students' language needs. This paper summarizes research on learning academic terms and includes a handbook which offers strategies for employing Marzano's six steps for vocabulary instruction in the classroom. The activities in this handbook guide teachers on how to use vocabulary strategies effectively. In addition, they encourage students to be active learners in their process of learning new terms due to the opportunities they have to analyze, define, apply and practice the vocabulary in multiple academic contexts.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to God, and my family who have pushed me through in spite of the distance. To my husband who has always believed in me. Finally, to my dear friend Cristina who has been a source of motivation and strength during moments of discouragement.

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A special thanks to Dr. Dobs, my advisor, for her support, her accurate academic guidance, and her patience. Without her I would be lost. Also, I would like to thank all my professors that taught me during this academic journey and make possible this dream.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

English as a second language (ESL) students have been increasing in number in the last two years in the elementary school I work. The ESL program is in charge of helping these students develop the necessary language skills to master the curriculum school content. However, I see ESL students struggle with reading texts due to a lack of knowledge of the vocabulary included in them. As a foreign elementary teacher, I am asked to help Spanish speaking families with the translation services, and I have realized that most of these families have children that can speak English, but when they must take reading tests, complete an assignment, or show their work in the school, their academic performance and scores are deficient. Many teachers think that because the students speak English, they can understand the academic content easily, but in most cases, ESL students' reality is different. A lack of vocabulary causes significant disadvantages in learning, and it is the main barrier to ESL students' reading comprehension (Newton et al., 2008).

Specifically, academic vocabulary is one of the main concerns for the ESL facilitators at my school because curriculum standards such as the Common Core underline the importance of explicitly teaching academic vocabulary that students need for school success (Peregoy & Boyle, 2017). Considering that social language is used in daily communicative interactions, this type of language is easy for students to remember and practice. In contrast, academic language is related to specific content domain terminology found in textbooks, academic articles, and classrooms settings. This type of language is a challenge for students to master due to the limited time of exposition to it that they have.

The development of strategies that support the learning of academic vocabulary has been a challenge for ESL teachers. For that reason, this project aims to ensure that English language learners can acquire a baseline of academic vocabulary required to fulfill the expectation of the Common Core and feel more motivated to participate in their vocabulary learning process. In addition, ESL facilitators can benefit from this guideline to teach academic vocabulary because the handbook is designed to provide teachers with strategies and activities that guide them to deliver adequate vocabulary lessons and help students become successful learners.

The handbook includes pre-assessment and assessment formats to track students' vocabulary development. Also, teachers can find information on Marzano's (2020) six steps to teach vocabulary explicitly, which help students recognize new academic terms and their definitions, along with varied and engaging activities for practicing and applying this vocabulary. The guidelines offered in the handbook help teachers to have a detailed blueprint on how to teach strategies to learn academic vocabulary. These strategies are flexible and can be applied to a variety of academic content lessons and be developed through speaking and writing activities as well. Furthermore, this handbook is developed using several studies that support the rationale for implementing detailed activities that promote the students' thinking skills and a better understanding of academic vocabulary through descriptions, explanations, examples, and graphic representations.

In addition to activities and strategies to teach academic vocabulary, this thesis underlines the importance of helping ESL students to become more independent learners to acquire academic vocabulary. The handbook will provide guidance to implement activities and strategies in ESL classrooms to nurture the academic vocabulary gap in the ESL population.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In this chapter, I will review research and concepts pertaining to academic vocabulary for ELLs, the factors affecting the learning of academic vocabulary, and the importance of academic vocabulary in the students' academic performance in reading. I will provide definitions of academic vocabulary and the factors that can affect how students learn it. I then discuss research that supports the importance of teaching academic vocabulary explicitly. Finally, I will conclude with a discussion about the challenges teachers face when teaching academic vocabulary.

Developing literacy language skills in a second language (L2) is a challenging task. It takes at least five years of academic language exposure for English language learners (ELLs) to master language skills at a native speaker level (Cummins, 1980). Cummins pointed out that the language ELLs are exposed to can be classified into two different types. One is the social language or the language of basic interpersonal communications skills (BICS). This type of language is used in an informal setting such as the playground, a party, or at home, and it requires a minimal amount of critical thinking. The second type is cognitive academic language proficiency or (CALP). This type of language is used for academic purposes such as math content lessons, history lectures, or standardized tests. CALPS requires a higher order thinking process such as predicting, contrasting information, or expressing abstract ideas.

One important point that calls the attention of second language acquisition researchers is vocabulary knowledge, specifically knowledge related to CALPS. Many researchers agree that vocabulary is a fundamental component of language proficiency that influences how effectively a student performs in the target language (Teng, 2015). In an academic context, to get a good

reading comprehension level, ELL students must understand the academic vocabulary included in the texts. Neuman & Wright (2014) found that unknown vocabulary affects reading comprehension because "without vocabulary knowledge, words are just words without meaning" (p. 6). Similarly, Newton et al. (2008) also mentioned that the lack of vocabulary causes significant disadvantages in learning, and it is the main barrier to ELLs' reading comprehension.

Academic Vocabulary

It is critical to begin by examining relevant concepts to gain a comprehensive and clear understanding of what academic vocabulary is. Academic literacy, academic language, and academic vocabulary are terms discussed under the context of academic domain knowledge by several researchers. Scott et al. (2008) explained that academic vocabulary is a register that includes particular lexical, morphological, syntactic, and stylistic characteristics. (Also see Ehlers- Zavala, 2008). According to Paquot (2010), academic vocabulary is a set of terms used to describe the actions that distinguish academic activity, arrange scientific discourse, and construct academic texts. (Also see Nation, 2001). As these definitions show, academic vocabulary is a key dimension of language proficiency, and it allows users to understand and produce academic texts in diverse content areas. In addition to that, Alexander & Jetton (2000) suggested that certain content areas such as physics and mathematics have distinctive content and specific organizational structures and can be part of the same domain. Academic vocabulary has been classified into two main categories. The first one is domain-specific academic vocabulary or content-specific words; these are words used in disciplines such as algebra, chemistry, and civics. The second one is general academic vocabulary, that is, the vocabulary used across

content areas, though it can have a change in meaning according to the discipline in which the word is used.

This section showed that academic vocabulary is a term that refers to language that appears more frequently in academic texts than in other sorts of spoken and written discourses. It is also commonly used across diverse content areas, and some researchers have proposed a classification system for this vocabulary.

Classification of Academic Vocabulary

To make academic vocabulary reachable for students, Beck et al. (2013) offered a three-tiered vocabulary classification system to help students and instructors distinguish between vocabulary words. Tier one words are the most basic. They can be learned by hearing family and friends use them in ordinary discussions (e.g., book, pencil, cat, talk and apple). Tier two includes high-frequency words that appear in a variety of topics and contexts across domains. This classification of words is referred to as academic vocabulary and are words that can include multiple meanings (e.g., data, benevolent, effect, complex and verify). Tier three vocabulary includes terminology employed in specialized fields like science and history. This classification is also known as content-specific or discipline domain words (e.g., osmosis, isosceles, asphalt and photosynthesis). Similarly, Fisher and Fry (2008) proposed a system of categorization which consists of three clusters of words: 1) general words, which are essential terms needed for reading such as high frequency words, 2) specialized words, which appear in different types of content and include discipline-specific words, and 3) technical words, which are discipline or content-specific terms.

Harmon et al. (2008) based their work on Fisher and Fry's (2008) proposal. These researchers took the first two categories proposed by Fisher and Fry (2008) and added a third one called word cluster or terms that appear in specific content areas such as physics, and a fourth one named symbolic representation, which incorporates chemical abbreviations.

As mentioned above, academic vocabulary is critical to building academic language required in the domain of diverse content areas. The classification of words related to academic vocabulary can be a tool to facilitate the teaching and learning process in school, to boost students' academic performance, and to avoid frustrations related to learning a second language, specifically academic vocabulary. ELLs face challenges of different types when learning a second language, and it should be a concern of instructors to understand and tailor this learning process to ensure complete understanding of the concepts (Sousa 2011).

Factors Affecting ELLs' Vocabulary Learning

Several factors can impact the process of learning a second language (L2), and academic vocabulary is one essential key to language development. According to Perogy & Boyle (2017), factors such as the socio-cultural and economic context of the language learning environment, first language (L1) development, and learner psychology influence L2 development significantly.

ELLs' economic context may influence their academic success (Ravitch, 2013). Many ELLs come from low-income homes and have little exposure to academic vocabulary that help them to understand what they are reading. The author argued that the quality of speech heard in low-income homes is inadequate because these families do not share family time with their children usually due to their working schedules. High income families have more reading resources and spend more time with their children which provides better language exposure for

the children. In the same way, Alexander et al. (2007) concluded from their research that ELLs from poor families usually have a low academic learning achievement in school because their parents have low literacy instruction. (Also see Fry 2008).

Another vital aspect to consider in ELLs' vocabulary learning is culture. ELLs come from diverse cultural backgrounds that can affect the way the students interact in class. Most ELLs feel disengaged in the classroom because they cannot find cultural elements related to their previous knowledge that promote a sense of belonging. According to Perogy & Boyle (2013), teachers need to find ways to honor ELLs' home language and cultures to boost English language skills. By nurturing these aspects, ELLs can be more comfortable being part of the class and the new culture they are immersed in and easily incorporate the new linguistic and academic knowledge. As a result, the learners improve in their English language competencies. Short et al. (2018) stated that teachers are required to learn about their ELLs' cultural backgrounds. Creating a sensitive environment to ELLs' culture, norms, and behaviors guarantees a safer school setting favorable to increasing second language learning. In addition to that, Culhane (2014) argued that for optimal second language skill development, learners must adopt the new linguistic and cultural behaviors necessary to develop linguistic competence in the L2 due to the intertwined natures of language and culture.

"Language is a complex neurophysiological function. It can be thought as a software that runs on the hard work of the brain" (Anderson & Lighfoot, 2002 as cited in Short et al., 2018, p.21). Short et al. (2018) stated that teachers must know their ELLs' first language development level to understand how this linguistic background facilitates second language learning skills. Also, Cummins (1981) proposed that the language skills that ELLs possess in their L1 facilitate

the L2 learning process. ELLs' L1 concepts and ideas can be transferrable to the L2. The stronger the L1 is, the easier it is for ELLs to learn new vocabulary and language skills.

Students require a safe learning environment to learn a second language and achieve positive results. In a negative emotional setting, students can develop a mental block that prevents them from practicing their language skills. In contrast, a positive environment in which students feel safe and relaxed is constructive for language learning. Proper handling of emotions in a classroom environment and supporting each student to overcome the negative emotional charges are essential responsibilities of the educator (Williams et al., 2015).

Another factor to take into account is the attitude ELLs have towards the second language. Attitude has a major influence on language development skills. Montero et al. (2014) refer to this aspect as a crucial one because learners' way of thinking or feeling towards their new language can lead them to try and incorporate and practice the new L2 linguistic abilities easily. (Also see Hosseini & Pourmandnia, 2013). In addition to that, understanding how students perceive themselves has a direct relationship with the type of vocabulary they use. Koosha et al. (2016) defined self-esteem as a key aspect in learning a second language as well.

Teaching Academic Vocabulary

As mentioned above, many factors can impact ELLs' second language development and academic vocabulary is a key element in their language performance. Low academic language skills in the L2 are linked to poor academic achievement. According to several studies, ELLs may struggle with reading comprehension because they lack sufficient academic vocabulary (Bauman et al., 2002; Biemiller & Boote, 2006; Carlo et al., 2004; Newton et al. 2008). As a result, students with poor vocabulary have low probabilities of success in school. Graves (2006)

suggested that ELLs' instructors need to help them build academic content vocabulary in English. By providing direct instruction of academic vocabulary, ELLs can grasp the meaning of new content words in order to develop classwork, discussions, and papers with greater success. (Also see Zwiers, 2008). Many researchers have suggested that direct instruction of vocabulary requires a series of vocabulary strategies (e.g. Cody, 1997; Nation, 2001). It is important to define the concept of vocabulary strategies and their relationship with the ELLs' learning process. According to Nation (2001), vocabulary learning strategies are part of language learning strategies. Language learning strategies are defined as cognitive steps that the learners use to promote their learning, comprehension, and retention of the L2 (Also see O'Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Oxford (1990) proposed a classification of language learning strategies. The author divided the strategies into two groups: direct and indirect. Direct strategies are composed of memory, cognitive and compensating strategies. These strategies are helpful to store, retrieve, transform, and comprehend the new language. Indirect strategies support coordinating, planning, and evaluating factors such as motivation and anxiety which can affect the L2 learning process, as well as the way the learners use the L2 to interact with others. These strategies are metacognitive, social, and affective.

Research has shown that ELLs trained in the use of vocabulary learning strategies are more successful in the process of gradually developing language skills. In their teaching manual, Marzano & Pickering's (2005) recommend six strategies for directly teaching vocabulary. The first one is to provide a description, an explanation, or an example of the unknown word. The second one is to ask learners to provide their own definitions, explanations, or examples of the new words. The third one is to ask students to draw or represent the word. The fourth one is to

expose students to activities to add the new vocabulary knowledge with their previous lexical background. The fifth one is to promote discussion activities to use the new vocabulary. The last one is to design games or activities that students can play with the new vocabulary.

A number of studies have reported the benefits of implementing vocabulary strategies in the process of learning an L2 (Blachowicz et al., 2006; Corson, 1997; Dobao, 2014; Harmon et al., 2002; Huong, 2006; Lin, 2018). For example, the study conducted by Blachowicz et al. (2006) examined the importance of developing strategies to master the depth and the breadth knowledge of a word. The depth knowledge is the understanding of the morphological, and syntactic qualities of the word, as well as its pronunciation, spelling, and definition. The breadth is the number of words known. The authors found that ELLs that were training in developing the depth and the breadth knowledge of a word can give their definition of the terms and retain them easier. The study concluded that ELLs get better results on their vocabulary assessments when using these types of vocabulary strategies (Also see Flanigan et al., 2007). Harmon et al. (2002) found that the implementation of vocabulary strategies that included discussing the meaning of unknown words with peers increased ELLs' awareness of the vocabulary strategies they needed to apply and encouraged them to discover their own strategies.

More evidence of the success of the implementation of vocabulary strategies was found in a study conducted by Coxhead (2012). The author provided different reading resources to expose learners to new academic vocabulary and then apply vocabulary strategies. Then, the author modeled writing examples to include the new academic words. The study concluded that students demonstrated improvement in their oral and written academic vocabulary productions.

In addition to that, Colorado (2007) suggested to associate the new vocabulary with words that are more common to ELLs or to provide a translation of the words. The author's

proposal is based on ELLs' motivation as the main factor to engage them in their learning process and based on the development of their L1.

As noted above, the implementation of vocabulary learning strategies has demonstrated significant results in the L2 learning process. Marzano and Simms (2013) stated that vocabulary strategies employed to teach tier one and two terms can also be used to teach tier three. However, according to Marzano (2020), ELLs require training to use vocabulary strategies to learn tier three vocabulary because this type of vocabulary is less frequent to use in their daily conversations and contains words with multiple meanings that can confuse ELLs. With one- and two-tier vocabulary, the instructor can rely on ELLs' incidental learning or the learning that happens outside the classroom environment to reinforce the terms, but tier three vocabulary requires explicit instruction by teachers. Marzano (2020) underlines that ELLs can have better opportunities to internalize academic terminology if they are exposed to a diverse number of vocabulary strategies to practice the academic terms. According to Cohen (1998), the most effective vocabulary strategy occurs when it is integrated into daily classroom instruction, which means that learners need time to practice and incorporate the strategies in their class assignments to master them. Besides that, some authors have suggested that instructors need to name the strategies to facilitate the students' recognition of them, to explain why a particular strategy is vital in the development of the assignment, and to show how the strategy benefits the learning process (Chamot, 2009; Cohen, 2014; Wilson & Conyers, 2016). Furthermore, teachers should require students to recall these strategies while working on different tasks, as well as provide opportunities for students to share and discuss these strategies with their classmates.

Conclusion

ELLs must learn a second language and academic content vocabulary in a short amount of time which makes it essential to teach academic vocabulary strategies explicitly. Many studies have provided evidence that ELLs struggle to master academic vocabulary due to their lack of exposure to it (Dobelmann & Stern, 2009; Ellis, 1995). In addition, academic language is a challenge to retain because it is used in the classroom mainly, and ELLs do not apply it enough in other contexts to make it part of their lexicon (Vacca & Vacca, 2008). For that reason, ELLs' instructors need to implement vocabulary strategies to help ELLs master the academic content. Vocabulary strategies have been recognized as critical tools in the process of learning an L2 and the development of thinking skills. Many authors promote the use of vocabulary strategies to facilitate the learning of vocabulary related to tier one, two and three; however, tier three requires applying vocabulary strategies rigorously to achieve the internalization of the terms because tier three is related to academic domain vocabulary which is used in school settings most of the times. As suggested by Beck and Mackeown (2013), the three tiers should be taught in authentic literacy contexts; however, it is vital to emphasize that students require multiple opportunities to understand the meaning and applied terms related to tier three. The findings presented above showed the importance of exposing ELLs to different resources that include academic vocabulary and making ELLs aware of the use of vocabulary strategies to promote the acquisition of academic vocabulary and language development skills.

Chapter Three: Project Outline

In this chapter, I will explain the need for a practical handbook to target academic vocabulary for ELLs. The handbook will provide easy strategies to be applied primarily with tier three vocabulary, but they can also be used to teach tier one and two.

This three-tiered system for classifying vocabulary, as described in chapter two, was proposed by Beck et al. (2013) to assist teachers in selecting vocabulary that promotes students' language development. The frequency in use, complexity, and meaning of words are used to determine their tier.

Tier one words are the most common. They can be learned through family conversations and daily conversations (e.g., food, bus, fish, and banana). Tier two words contain high-frequency words that appear in cross-curricular contents and can have multiple meanings (e.g., complex, data, and foundation). Tier three vocabulary includes terminology used in specialized areas like science and history. These low-frequency words are also called discipline domain words (e.g., tundra, isosceles and molecular).

Many researchers have found that vocabulary is a vital component of language proficiency which influences how students perform in the target language. In an academic context, ELLs must understand the academic vocabulary included in the texts to comprehend it sufficiently; a lack of vocabulary may cause significant difficulties in learning, and it is the main barrier to ELLs' reading comprehension (Neuman & Wright 2014; Newton et al. 2008; Teng, 2015).

Since many ELLs may not have adequate opportunity to practice tier-three academic vocabulary in other contexts different from the exposure they have in school, and academic vocabulary plays a significant role in students' academic performance, it is necessary to implement strategies to help them acquire these academic terms. Due to the challenges that ELLs face with the lack of academic language, this handbook will benefit ELLs and their teachers by providing ideas and strategies for explicitly teaching academic vocabulary in a fun and engaging way. Besides that, teachers require training to address students' needs and gaps in their vocabulary learning process. The handbook created for this thesis will assist teachers in finding activities and strategies to deliver adequate vocabulary lessons and help students to become successful learners.

Targeting Academic Vocabulary: A Handbook for Teachers of English Language Learners is based on Marzano's six-step process for teaching academic vocabulary. This handbook is designed to assist teachers who require guidance in teaching academic vocabulary explicitly providing a pre-assessment format and adaptable activities that can be used to teach vocabulary tier one and two as well. This handbook provides adequate explanations of how to introduce each one of the six steps to teach academic vocabulary in class. In addition, it offers detailed information on how to incorporate varied activities to promote understanding of the terms. These activities provide diverse opportunities to analyze, practice, and incorporate the vocabulary in real academic contexts. Furthermore, the information presented in this handbook allows ELLs to have an active role in their learning process because the training they receive on how to use these strategies lets them employ these tools independently. Besides that, an easy-to-use assessment format is included in this handbook to help students track their own academic vocabulary progress.

As indicated by Beck and Mackeown (2013), the three tiers should be taught in authentic literacy contexts; for that reason, it is vital to emphasize that students require multiple opportunities to understand the meaning and applied terms related to tier three vocabulary. This handbook illustrates the importance of exposing ELLs to different resources that include academic vocabulary and making them aware of the use of vocabulary strategies to promote the acquisition of academic vocabulary and language development skills.

Chapter 4: The Project

Targeting Academic Vocabulary: A Handbook for Teachers of English Language Learners.

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Introduction

Research related to academic vocabulary and second language (L2) learning has recognized the relationship between English language learners' (ELLs) vocabulary knowledge and language proficiency in the target language (Teng, 2015). To achieve a high-level of reading comprehension in an academic setting, ELLs must be familiar with academic vocabulary. Academic vocabulary is a term that refers to language that appears more frequently in academic texts than in other sorts of spoken and written discourses. For that reason, it is important that ELLs' instructors provide direct academic vocabulary instruction and apply diverse activities and strategies that help their students internalize the academic terminology (Marzano, 2020).

The present handbook *Targeting Academic Vocabulary: A Handbook for Teachers of English Language Learners* is designed to support teachers and ELLs with the implementation of strategies to learn academic vocabulary in an easy and engaging way. The strategies presented in this handbook can be used to teach tier one, two and three vocabularies. It is important to mention that the research developed by Marzano (2020) takes a central role in this project. Many of the strategies presented in this handbook are based on those recommended by Marzano, but they have been adapted to make them more appealing and easier to understand for ELLs and their teachers. With that being said, the strategies included in this handbook are expected to provide ELLs' teachers with tools to help ELLs become more successful in the acquisition of academic vocabulary and more independent so they may apply the strategies to identify unknown words. The development of this handbook is based on Marzano's six-step proposal for effective vocabulary instruction:

Marzano's Six Step Process for Vocabulary Instruction

1. Provide a description, explanation or example of the new academic term.
2. Ask ELLs to restate the descriptions, explanations, or examples of the academic term in their own words.
3. Ask students to construct a picture, pictograph, or other symbolic representation of the academic term (Description, example or definition).
4. Engage ELLs in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms to which they have previously been exposed.
5. Ask ELLs to discuss the new word with one another.
6. Invite ELLS to play games to reinforce and review new vocabulary.

Step 1: Teacher Provides a Description, Explanation or Example of the New Academic Term

What teachers can do:

- Determine what ELLs already know about the academic word.

Teachers need to establish what the students know about the term. The following graphic organizer can help teachers learn about ELLs' previous knowledge of the word.

Academic Word:			
I Recognize the Word	I Can Define the Word	I Can Use the Word in a Sentence	I Can Use the Word in a Different Context

Figure 1 Informal Assessment of Vocabulary. *Adapted from Reading Writing and Learning in ESL* by Peregoy and Boyle (2017).

- Invite ELLs to complete the information under the proper box. Read aloud each category and explain to them the expectation.
- As an alternative activity, instructors can ask students to work in pairs to brainstorm what they know about the word and summarize their ideas in the chart.

Once teachers analyze the data from the chart above, they can start presenting the academic term following these steps:

- Provide ELLs information about the term. Use realia, if possible, drawings, or videos. Explain what part of speech the term is.
- Use examples, descriptions, and explanation of the word. Show different examples of sentences that include the academic term. Use easy vocabulary to facilitate ELLs' understanding of the academic word.

Activities to Implement: Discussion Starter

This strategy helps to introduce new academic terms. This tool provokes discussions about vocabulary related to a unit, topic, or academic word. This tool considers ELLs' prior knowledge of the vocabulary terms and helps them to build foundational knowledge and vocabulary before instruction.

How to work with the Discussion starter

- Write the word in the middle of the chart. Then, create a web of related words or concepts around the center word.
- Then, read the words aloud to make students familiar with the terms.
- Explain how the terms around the academic word help to describe it. Include different types of sentences to make sure students are understanding the associated words related to the academic term selected.
- Invite ELLs to read aloud and pronounce the words to make them more familiar with the new terms.

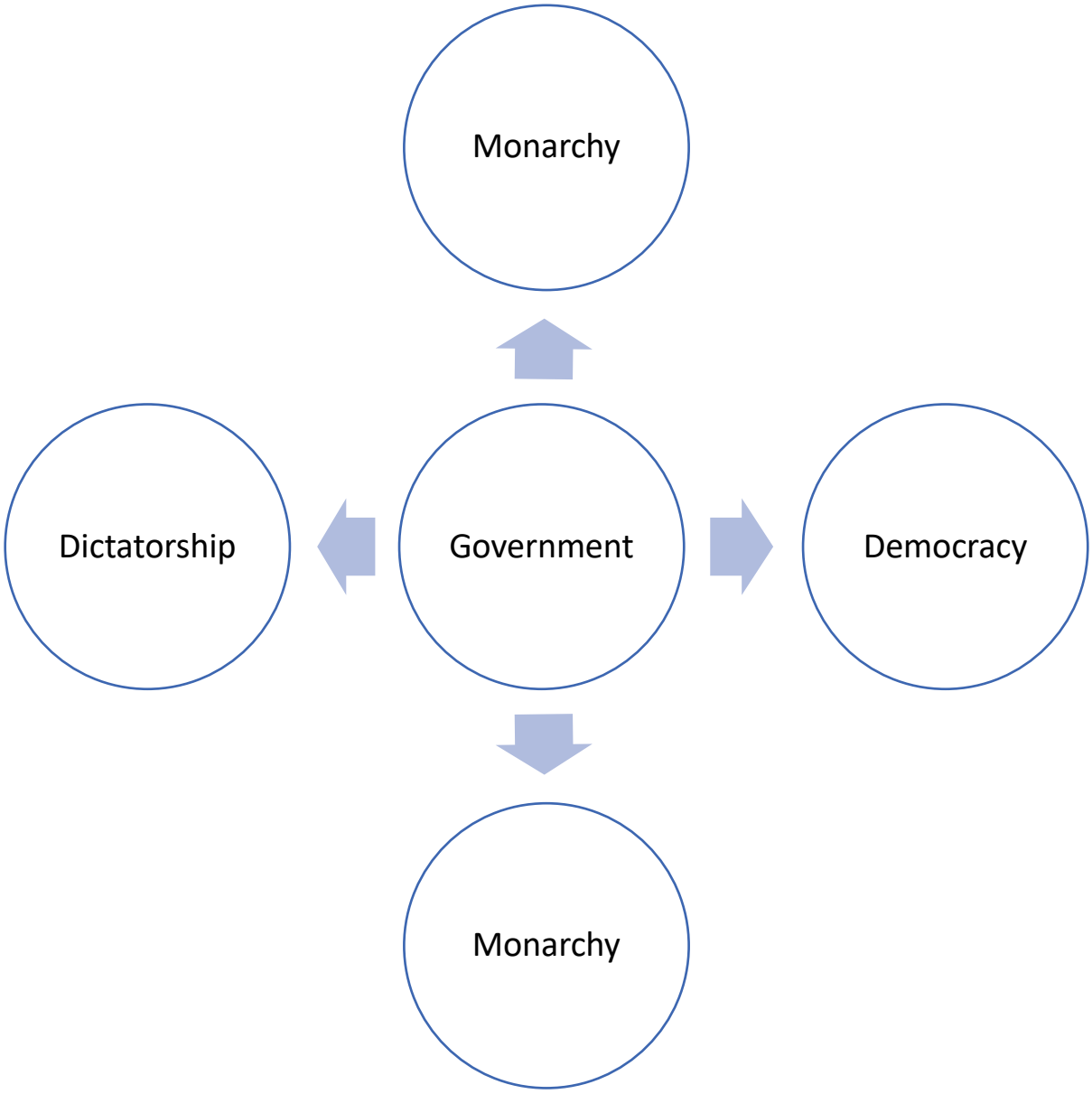

Figure 2 Adapted from: *Remove limits with systemic vocabulary instruction*. By Stone, B.J. & Urquhart V. (2008).

Activity to implement: The Frayer Model

This strategy helps teachers to introduce vocabulary by defining target vocabulary and applying ELLs' knowledge related to the academic term.

How to work with The Frayer Model

- Write the term in the middle of the chart.
- On the top left corner, teachers write an easy definition of the word.
- After that, on the top right corner write features of the word that can help ELLs identify what part of the speech the word is.
- On the bottom left corner, teacher can write a sentence, a synonym or provide an illustration of the word.
- On the bottom right corner write an antonym, a sentence with a non-proper definition or an irrelevant illustration of what the term is.
- Show ELLs drawings, videos or realia related to the term.
- Work the terms in a context such as a sentence, a paragraph, a video, or a song.
- As a last resource, use the dictionary definition to introduce the word. In this first step of introducing academic vocabulary, the dictionary is recommended for high-intermediate or advance students because the type of vocabulary included in the dictionary can contain elaborate descriptions that can be difficult for ELLs to understand.

Definition:

A democracy is a government run by the people. Each citizen has a say (or vote) in how the government is run.

Characteristics of the word:

Democracy is a Noun.

The word 'democracy' has its origins in the Greek language. It combines two shorter words: 'demos' meaning whole citizen living within a particular city-state and 'kratos' meaning power or rule.

Democracy

(Main Word)

Example:

In a **democracy** every person has the rigth to vote and decide.

Non-Examples

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In a Monarchy the king or queen has all the power to decide.

Figure 3. Adapted from: *101 strategies to make academic vocabulary stick*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development. By Sprenger, M. (2017).

Step 2 Ask ELLs to restate the descriptions, explanations, or examples of the academic term in their own words.

What teachers can do:

- After introducing the academic term, teachers can ask students to create their own meanings of the academic term using the words they know. It is vital to motivate ELLs to make the effort of writing their own descriptions, examples, or definitions rather than replicating what the teachers stated.
- Try to connect the term with familiar situations for them such as an event happening in the school, on the news, in the classroom, or on television.
- It recommended that ELLs' have a journal, portfolio or a vocabulary notebook to keep a record of the academic vocabulary they are learning, the explanations, descriptions or examples they are creating and observe their own progress.
- Check ELLs' understanding of the word and correct them in case they are not explaining or describing the term properly

Activity to Implement: Flash cards

Flashcards are an engaging tool to invite your students to create their own definitions of the words. ELLs can use index cards to create their own flash cards.

How to work with Flashcards:

- Ask ELLs to write the term on one side of the card. Then, ask them to flip the card and write their descriptions, examples, or definitions of the word. Students can add a picture to help themselves memorize the new term.

- Ask students to read the cards aloud to check pronunciation of their definitions, examples, or descriptions.
- Invite ELLs to work with a partner and discuss the descriptions, explanations or definitions they crated.

Activity to Implement: Vocabulary Journal Pages

This tool is a collection of vocabulary that can be used to write students' definition of the words, add pictures, synonyms, antonyms, and other extra information that the instructor considers relevant such as the source in which the word was found.

How to work with Vocabulary Journal Pages

- Ask ELLs to write the academic term.
- Invite students to write information related to the source in which they found the word such as the surrounding sentences in the text and the title and author of the text. As an optional step students can include the dictionary definition.
- Motivate Ells to write their definition of the academic term.
- Students can draw a picture of the word if they want to, it is optional.
- Invite ELLs to share their definitions with the class or as an optional activity, they can share their definition with a partner.
- Listen to ELLs' definitions and give them guidance in case they are not providing a proper definition, example, or description of the academic word. Use examples from daily life when necessary.

Vocabulary Journal Page	
My new word is…	Write the term
It is related to…	(Science, social studies, math. ELA)
I found it…	Textbook, magazine, worksheet Tittle of the text: Author:
My Definition:	Write your created definition or description of the term
Example:	Write a sentence that include the academic term
Picture:	In this step the picture related to the academic term is optional because the main focus is on restating a definition.
Dictionary Definition (Optional)	

Figure 4 Adapted from: *101 strategies to make academic vocabulary stick*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development. By Sprenger, M. (2017).

Another tool for the vocabulary journal page is the following graphic organizer, which may help ELLs' present their descriptions, definitions and examples. It contains basic but appropriate information to help ELLs to create their own definition of the academic term.

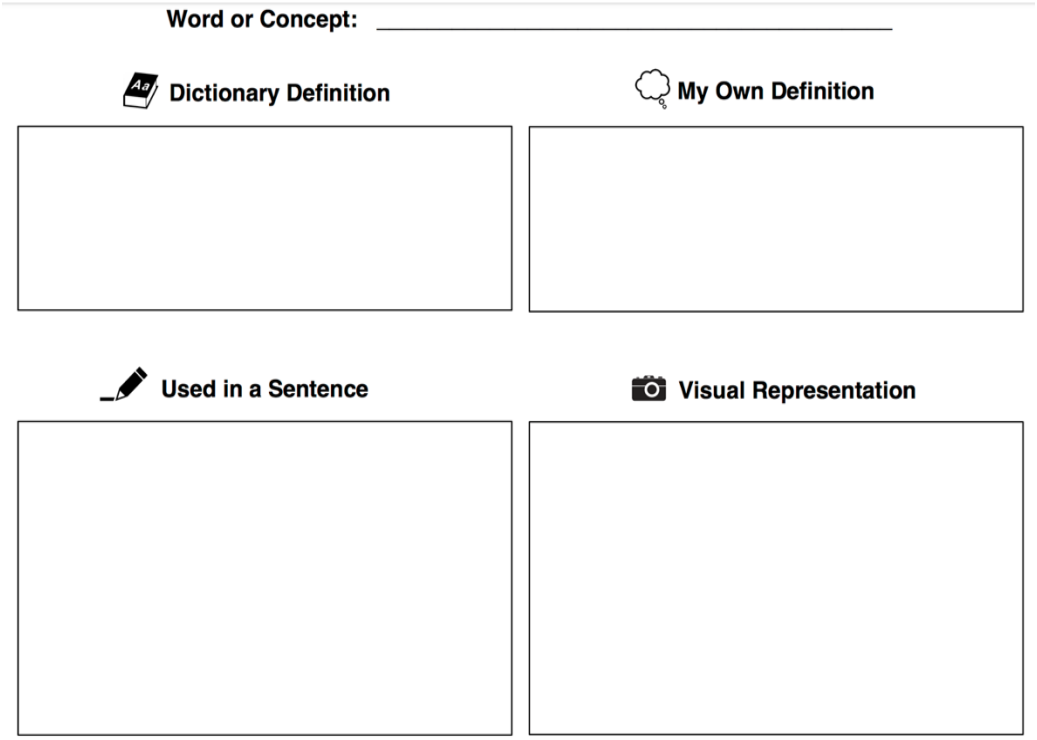


Figure .5 Approval for publishing this resource is pending by https://goalbookapp.com/toolkit/v/presentlevels/

Activity to Implement: Sticky Notes Word Wall

This activity is engaging for ELLs. It is easy to elaborate and provides a visual representation of the definitions, examples or descriptions made by the students.

How to work with Sticky notes Word Wall

- Instructors just need the white board or a poster board for this activity. They write the academic term on it.
- Ask ELLs to write their definitions, examples or descriptions and paste it around the term.
- Invite ELLs to read the definitions aloud. Provide guidance and explain the term to ELLs in case they are not using the term properly. Use student-friendly vocabulary and examples from daily life if possible.
- Take the time to correct pronunciation, grammar, and spelling

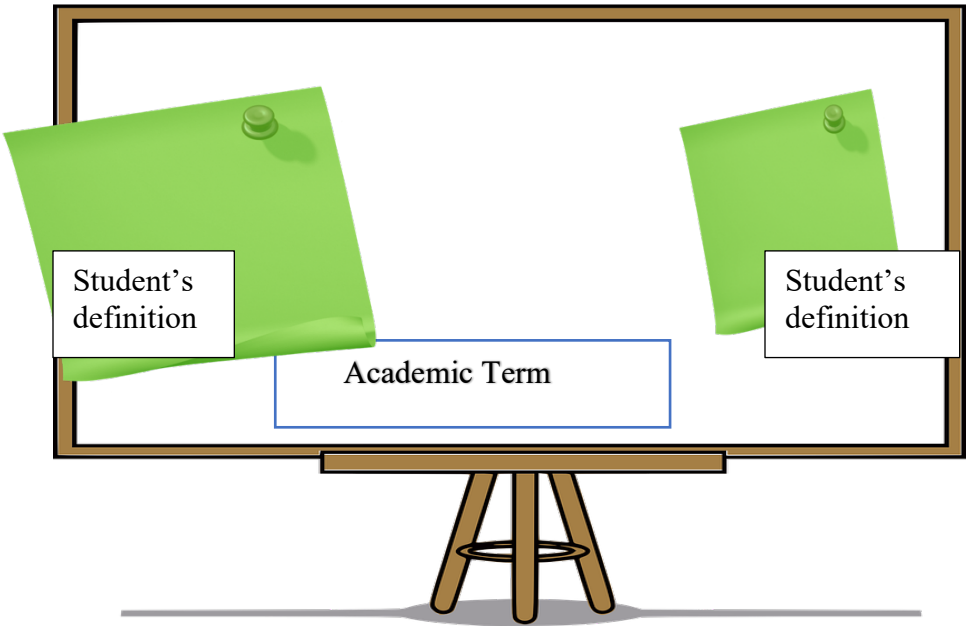


Figure 6 Adapted from: *101 strategies to make academic vocabulary stick*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development. By Sprenger, M. (2017).

Step 3: Show: Ask students to construct a picture, pictograph, or other symbolic representation of the academic term (Description, example or definition).

Activity to Implement: Sketch

Sketch is an engaging activity to elaborate nonlinguistic representations of the academic words.

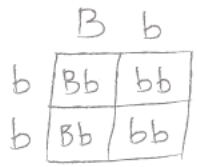
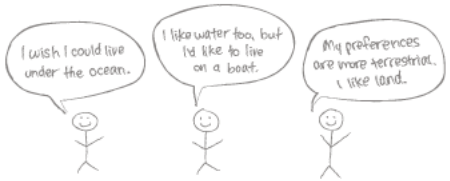
Method	Term	Picture
1. Sketch the actual object. *If a term is concrete and easy to depict, simply sketch a picture of it.*	Punnett square	
2. Sketch a symbol for the term. *If a term is abstract, sketch a symbol that represents the term.*	Fahrenheit	
3. Sketch an example of the term. *If a term is abstract, sketch an example of the term.*	organism	
4. Sketch a cartoon or vignette with a character using the term. *If a term is abstract, use speech bubbles to show how a character in a cartoon might use the term.*	terrestrial	
5. Sketch a graphic for the term. *If a term is abstract, sketch a graphic that depicts the meaning of the term.*	proliferation	

Figure 7 *Source: Marzano, R. J., & Simms, J. A. (2011).* Vocabulary for the Common Core. *Bloomington, IN: Marzano Resources.*

What teachers can do:

- Model the activity. Some ELLs might not be familiar with representing words in a nonlinguistic way, and especially if the academic word is an abstract term.
- Show your own drawings or show them images from internet that can be related to the term. Use examples of cartoons, pictionaries games, graffiti or any other source that help them to create their own representations.
- Explain to ELLs that the goal of the activity is to create a representation that helps them to understand and retain the academic word. It is not necessary to draw detailed and elaborate drawings.

How to work with the Sketch

- Ask ELLs to work in pairs to elaborate the non-linguistic representation. They can work individually as well.
- Motivate students to share their ideas and elaborate a creative representation.
- Explain to students that this activity is a way to show their understanding of the new term and they can present it in five different ways. The first one is to sketch the actual object. The second one is to sketch a symbol for the term. The third one is to sketch an example of the term. The fourth one is to sketch a cartoon or vignette with a character using the term and the last one is to sketch a graphic for the term, in case the term is abstract and requires the drawing to depict the meaning.
- Provide ELLs with necessary materials to work such as colored pencils, posters, or blank paper. Correct understanding of the academic terms when needed.

Step 4. Engage ELLs in activities that help them add to their knowledge of the terms to which they have previously been exposed.

What the teacher can do:

- Make sure ELLs have a clear understanding of steps one, two and three before they start working on step number four.
- Show students different ways to extend their knowledge of the academic word such as prefixes and suffixes that will help them remember the word. Searching for more antonyms and synonyms of the word will motivate ELLs to discuss similarities and differences of the term.
- Create analogies and metaphors using the academic word.
- Provide time for ELLs to check their notes on steps one, two and three.
- Invite students to discuss their findings, corrections, or examples of their knowledge related to the academic word.

Activity to implement: Synectics

Synetics is a strategy that provokes students to think about vocabulary words in creative ways in order to establish analogical or metaphorical comparisons.

How to work with Synectics

- Elaborate an example to model the strategy. Example: If the academic word is *Comet* for a science class, you can present these options:

Toaster Turtle Ice cube

Ask students to think which of the options above has an analogical relationship with the word *Comet*

Now write on the board:

A comet is like a _____because _____

Give ELLs the opportunity to establish the relationship between the words. Then write the proper answer:

A comet is like a stove because it burns very hot.

- Invite ELLs to work in groups and elaborate creative analogies or metaphors
- Motivate students to discuss or share their creations with their classmates. Intervene to correct the examples when necessary.

Academic Word	Vocabulary Options	Sentence
Comet	Stove Turtle Ice cube	A **comet** is like a toaster because it burns hot

Figure 8 Adapted from: *Strategies to Engage the Mind of the Learner: Building Strategies Learners.* Dayspring Printing. By Billmeyer, R. (2003).

Activity to Implement: Prefixes and Suffixes

Prefixes and suffixes help ELLs to expand vocabulary in a significant way. Their teachers can train students to identify terms that contain these word parts to enhance more understanding of the reading contents.

How to work with Prefixes and Suffixes

- Present prefixes and suffixes in separate lessons. You can use the same sequences or steps to introduce the lessons
- Introduce the prefix/suffix in isolation and write words that contain the prefix/suffix in sentences.
- Define what a prefix/suffix is. You can give them a list of prefixes/suffixes with their meanings. Take into account that suffixes can indicate if the word is a noun, verb, adverb, adjective and some superlative forms of the adjectives.
- Ask ELLs to find other words that contain the prefix/suffix and tell them to take notes in their journals, portfolios, or folders if they have.
- Model how to complete the chart below.

Prefix	Meaning	Word	Base/ Root Word	Sentence/ Drawing
Pre	Before	Prereading	Reading	Drawings provide important prereading information about the book.

Figure 9. Adapted from: *101 strategies to make academic vocabulary stick*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development. By Sprenger, M. (2017).

Word	Suffix	Meaning	New word used in a sentence
Statement	Ment	The action of doing something or the result of an action	Read the following statement and give an opinion.

Figure 10. Adapted from: *101 strategies to make academic vocabulary stick*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development. By Sprenger, M. (2017).

Step 5: Ask ELLs to discuss the new word with one another.

What teachers can do:

- Ask students to work in pairs or small groups to share their ideas, compare explanations, or descriptions of the academic terms. Give explanations of their non-linguistic representations of the academic vocabulary.
- Motivate students to discuss with their team any new information they have learned.
- Students can check their own work and add, delete, or change information related to their academic term.
- Keep clearing up any misunderstandings about the new terms if necessary.

Activity to implement: Word Information Chart

This is a modified KWL chart that allows ELLs to reflect on their experience learning the academic words.

Academic Word	My Definition	New information I learnt about the word
Classmate's name	His/her Definition	New information he/she learnt about the word
Classmate's name	His/her Definition	New information he/she learnt about the word

Figure 11. Adapted from: *101 strategies to make academic vocabulary stick*. Association for Supervision & Curriculum Development. By Sprenger, M. (2017).

How to work with the Word Information Chart

- Ask students to share with their group their definitions and what they learned about the word.
- Invite them to listen carefully to their partners' findings about the academic word and complete the chart. They can complete the chart individually or have one worksheet per group
- Ask them to read aloud some of the information they collect about the academic word in front of the class.
- Correct definitions of the words, grammar, spelling and pronunciation when necessary.

Activity to implement: Posters

Posters are an engaging group or individual activity to explore ELLs' creativity.

How to work with Posters

- Provide students with materials such as markers, crayons, posters, magazines, scissors and glue.
- Divide the class into small groups and ask them to present in a creative way relevant information they did not know about the academic word.
- Ask them to present the activity in front of the class.
- Correct their work when necessary.

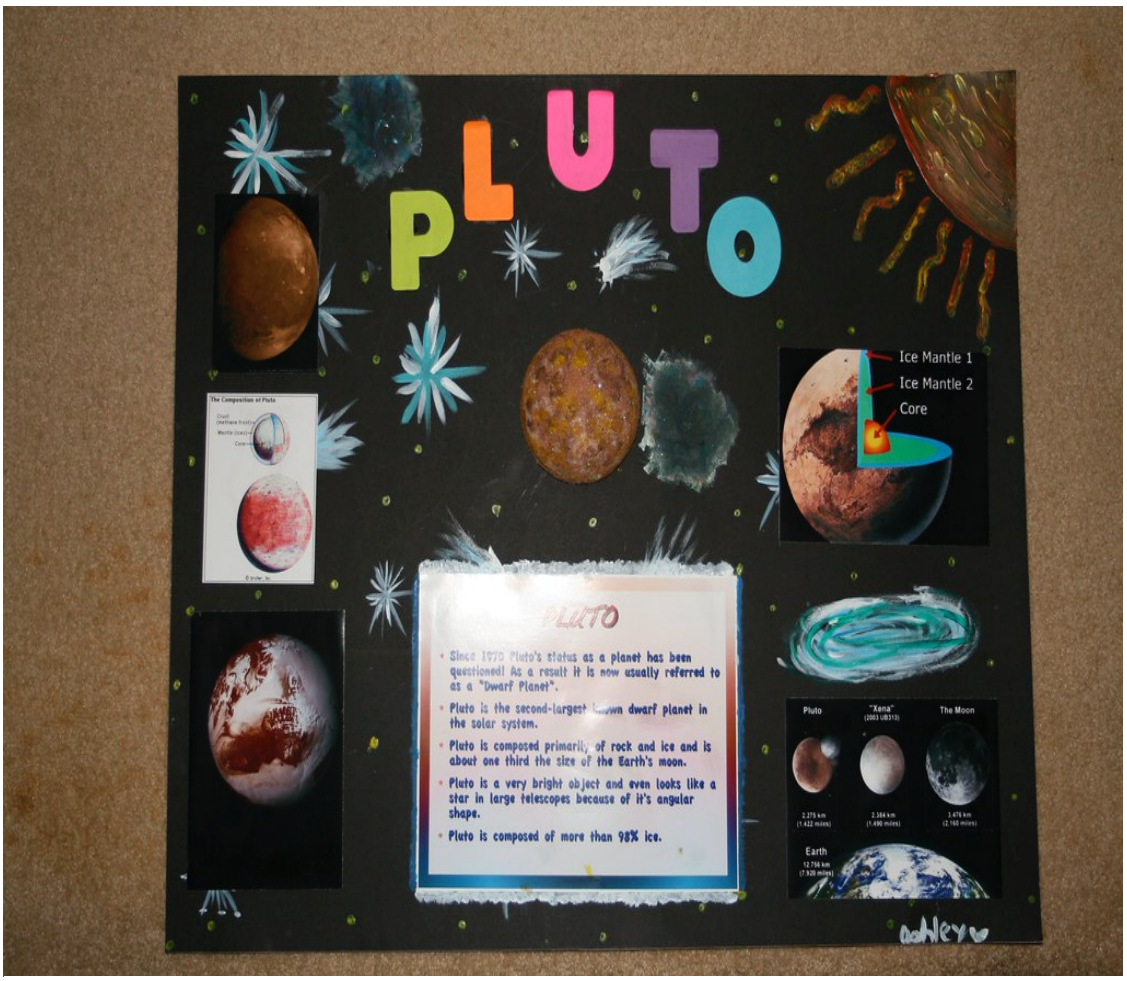


Figure 12 This Photo by Unknown Author is licensed under CC BY-ND

Step 6: Invite ELLS to play games to reinforce and review new vocabulary.

What teachers can do:

Engage students to review new vocabulary through fun activities and games that help them to develop better understanding of academic vocabulary and to retain the words. The following activities: Ask a question, Talk fast and Pictionary are taken from *On Target: Strategies to Build Student Vocabularies By* ESA 6 & 7 with support from the SD Dept. of Education. (2006).

Activity to implement: Ask a Question

This game is an innovative way to engage students to practice vocabulary words. Ask a Question is similar to the popular television game show Jeopardy.

How to work with Ask a Question

- Create a matrix with six columns and six rows. Title the matrix with the unit of study. The top row's cells are labeled with categories that relate to the unit of study or academic words.
- Related content terms are listed below each category. Each cell contains a vocabulary word that correlates with the column's category. Use a blackboard, PowerPoint, or an online resource to play the game.
- If using a blackboard, cover cells with a sticky note to hide terms from students. Each cell is labeled with a point amount.
- Divide students into pairs or teams. Each team has to choose a speaker. Have the speakers select a category and point amount. Under each point amount is an academic

vocabulary word. Explain that the speaker has to create a definition for the word. The definition must be stated as a question. *Example:* Word: barometer. Question: What instrument measures air pressure?

- Decide whether a student's question represents an adequate understanding of the term.
- Give points if the team's speaker answers correctly in the form of a question. At the end of the game, the team with the most points wins.

Ask a Question

TROPICAL STORMS	INSTRUMENTS	LOOK IN THE SKY!	LET'S GET WET	BRR! WINTER STORMS	IN A WORD
10 Points	10 Points	10 Points	10 Points	10 Points	10 Points
20 Points	20 Points	20 Points	20 Points	20 Points	20 Points
30 Points	30 Points	30 Points	30 Points	30 Points	30 Points
40 Points	40 Points	40 Points	40 Points	40 Points	40 Points
50 Points	50 Points	50 Points	50 Points	50 Points	50 Points

Figure 13 *On Target: Strategies to Build Student Vocabularies. Retrived from* from http://celi.olemiss.edu/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2014/01/StrategiesVocabulary-080808.pdf

Activity to implement: Talk Fast

This activity provides ELLs with opportunities to practice academic vocabulary multiple times.

How to work with Talk Fast:

- Present to students the academic words being used in each round.
- Ask ELLS to work in groups. Ask them to choose a "talker" to begin the game.
- Create a list of the academic words you want students to practice. Give the talker one academic term with a list of words related to it. Antonyms/ synonyms.
- Make sure you give each group the same number of academic terms.
- The talker tries to have his/her team members say each word related to the academic term selected using descriptions. Descriptions can be words, or sentences.

  Example: A talker giving clues for *Milky way* might call out the following clues:

  – "This is the galaxy that includes our planet'

  – Something astronomers observe with powerful telescopes"
- As soon as the first word is guessed, the talker can move to the next word on the list until the set is completed.
- After one minute, teams are given points for each word guessed.
- The talker role is passed to the next team member, and round two begins with another category and list of words.

Activity to implement: Pictionary

In this game, students are required to draw pictures as clues to the academic vocabulary word for team members to correctly identify the term.

How to work with Pictionary

- Create a list with the academic terms you want ELLs to practice. Take into account that you will need a board or a poster and markers.
- Divide the class into teams of three or four students.
- Explain that each team's goal is to be the first in a round to correctly identify academic vocabulary terms.
- Select one student on each team as the artist. This student is the only one able to see the list of words to be illustrated and draws a rough sketch of what the word represents.
- Tell the group, that if the team identifies all the terms, they have to raise their hands to end the first round.
- Now, select another artist to keep playing the game.

How to assess ELL's Vocabulary progress

According to Peregoy and Boyle (2017) ELLs' teachers can assess students in an informal way by observing their work in small groups, or independently. Periodically teachers can collect their vocabulary journal, posters, or any other work that show evidence of their performance with the academic vocabulary. Steps four, five and six proposed by Marzano (2020) to teach vocabulary are effective ways to get data related to the academic terms and the ELLs' progress. Also, listening to ELLs' explanations and discussions about academic word meanings and the type of inferences students can provide about the terms can reveal ELLs' word knowledge.

In addition to this informal recollection of information, ELLs' instructors can use tools like multiple choice tests, matching the word with the definition or creating cloze vocabulary activities to determine the level of understanding of academic terms that ELLs have. Marzano (2013) underlines the importance of introducing self-assessment formats to ELLs to help them be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their vocabulary learning process. ELLs' instructors can introduce the format below. It is important to read aloud and explain each category to students, so they become familiar with the expectation in each one of the statements and have a more accurate self-assessment.

0	1	2	3	4
I don't know, and can't do any part of the learning target.	With help, I know and can do some of the learning target.	I know and can do the easy parts, but I don't know and can't do the harder parts.	I know and can do the entire learning target without making mistakes.	I know and can do the learning target well enough that I can make connections that weren't taught to me.

Figure 14 *Source: Marzano, R. J., & Simms, J. A. (2011).* Vocabulary for the Common Core. *Bloomington, IN: Marz*

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Chapter Five: Conclusions

In a globalized world in which English is the language of international communication, more people have an urgent need to learn this language, and academic settings are not the exception. The number of language learners have increased significantly in the last years in the school where I work, in Hoke, North Carolina. Many of the ELLs enter the school with only basic literacy foundations in their first language which causes difficulties to learn a second language. Teachers feel committed to help ELLs in their process of developing L2 skills, but they struggle with the implementation of lessons that can address their L2 gaps. I have had the opportunity to work with the English as a Second language (ESL) instructors and I have seen their efforts to create activities to improve ELLs' second language learning process, but still ELL's keep having low academic and language performances mainly due to a lack of academic vocabulary.

This project was created taking into consideration my observations in the ESL classes, and the urgent need for the instructors to design more accurate lessons that fulfill ELLs' linguistic needs. I realized that teachers play a vital role in ELLs' language development skills. Instructors have a great responsibility not only of teaching a new language but also of providing students with a respectful class environment that can welcome them and make them feel included. That means that instructors need to have proper knowledge of their students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds; based on those foundations teachers can create meaningful lessons and adapt necessary teaching materials that promote a more successful and comfortable L2 learning environment. In addition to that, I have observed that students need to be equipped with adequate

vocabulary learning strategies that nurture their language skills and guide them to have more active language performance. Students require exposure to new academic language content in different ways to acquire it properly. That means that students need to be trained on how to apply vocabulary learning strategies to incorporate their new vocabulary and concepts to their previous knowledge and have multiple opportunities of practicing it.

It has been my experience that teachers struggle with adapting and creating lessons to target students' vocabulary needs because they do not feel they have the methods or enough training on how to address ELLs' linguistic gaps. For that reason, this handbook has the objective of providing teachers with a better understanding on how to teach academic vocabulary in an engaging and fun way. Besides, this handbook offers detailed examples of activities that can be implemented to introduce, understand, and apply new vocabulary in varied contexts. In addition to that, the handbook presents a format to apply a vocabulary pre assessment to be fulfilled before introducing the academic vocabulary and a rubric for assessing students' vocabulary progress to be completed by the end of the steps to teach academic vocabulary.

I hope the handbook I have created will serve as a practical resource for teachers to address students' lack of academic vocabulary in an engaging way by providing students with the proper strategies to build connections between their new words and their previous vocabulary knowledge. These connections will help students become active participants in their own learning process, willing to take more risks of applying the new linguistic knowledge in their oral and written productions. Also, I hope this project provides a blueprint on direct instruction of academic vocabulary that may ease ELLs 'instructors need of training on how to target academic terms efficiently.

Further work is needed to raise awareness in many school districts of the importance of including in their curricula direct instruction of academic vocabulary as part of teachers' lesson plans to benefit ELLs' academic vocabulary learning significantly.

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